

Pest Update (September 12, 2012)

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Note: samples containing living tissue may only be accepted from South Dakota. Please do not send samples of dying plants or insects from other states. If you live outside of South Dakota and have a question, instead please send a digital picture of the pest or problem. **Walnut samples may not be sent in from any location – please provide a picture!**

Available on the net at:

<http://sdda.sd.gov/Forestry/Educational-Information/PestAlert-Archives.aspx>

Any treatment recommendations, including those identifying specific pesticides, are for the convenience of the reader. Pesticides mentioned in this publication are generally those that are most commonly available to the public in South Dakota and the inclusion of a product shall not be taken as an endorsement or the exclusion a criticism regarding effectiveness. Please read and follow all label instructions and the label is the final authority for a product's use on a particular pest or plant. Products requiring a commercial pesticide license are occasionally mentioned if there are limited options available. These products will be identified as such but it is the reader's responsibility to determine if they can legally apply any product identified in this publication.

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Emerald ash borer update

A new infestation of emerald ash borer has been found in Minneapolis last week as well as a new state – Massachusetts. The beetle is continuing to be discovered in new areas and we are getting closer to the enviable day when it “appears” in South Dakota. I say “appear” as most new discoveries are found to have existed for at least 4 years before someone noticed.



The big question this week has been; “Why is my crabapple [or fill in another spring flowering plant] blooming now?” I received two great pictures showing a crabapple in bloom. Why is this happening now, particularly West River? Crabapples, lilacs, forsythias, viburnums and some other spring-flowering plants will bloom in late summer if they have been exposed to drought and high temperatures during the summer. The combined drought and heat causes the plant to enter a shallow dormancy. When slightly cooler temperatures (and sometimes moisture) return with September some flower buds open with having to fulfill their normal chilling requirements. Crabapples

may also experience some fall flowering if they have been severely defoliated by apple scab or tent caterpillars during the summer. The flowering is not usually a serious problem, less flowering next spring since some of the buds opened in the fall instead, is usually the only result of this off-schedule floral display but if new leaves appear as well that may mean the plant is resuming growth when it should be preparing for winter. Next year cankers and twig dieback may result from the exposure to freezing temperatures by this succulent tissue.



Apple harvest has begun in much of the state. The early season apples such as Beacon and Zestar! are already being harvested and some of the mid-season apples such as Sweet Sixteen are just a few days away. How do you know when to pick an apple? First, the color should have changed from the dull green or greenish yellow/red to the normal color for the particular variety, usually a bright red or yellow. The skin of the fruit will also develop a waxy appearance – when you can polish up the fruit on your shirt sleeve it’s usually ready to pick. If you pick a few apples cut them open and look at the seeds. The seeds of a ripe apple are typically brown rather than white of the

unripe fruit and finally there is the taste test – if its taste good, it's ready! To pick a ripe apple place the palm of your hand beneath the apple and lift up quickly with a slight twisting motion, a ripe apple will break free from the spur. If you are pulling the branches with the fruit – the apple is not quite ready to leave.



Something to look forward to next year.

Kurt Allen, a Forest Service entomologist, first noticed this last week - there are a lot of mourningcloak butterflies out. I found crabapple trees with overripe fruit covered with them this weekend. These adult butterflies will overwinter (unusual for most moths) and will lay eggs in early spring on twigs of elms and hackberries. The eggs

soon
hatch
and the

larvae, known as the spiny-elm caterpillar (pictured to the left), quickly defoliate a tree. We had an outbreak of this insect in 2007 and considering the number of butterflies out this autumn, if we have a mild winter, I suspect we'll see a lot of defoliation on elms and hackberries next summer.



E-samples



This is the time of year when I get lots of questions about eating those 'chestnuts' that are falling everywhere. This is one picture of these fruits sent in by an extension office this week, but I get them almost every day. First, these are not chestnuts. The American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) is generally not adapted to our state's growing conditions and the furthest west one that I have found one growing is in the Hodgson Arboretum at the

University of Minnesota Experiment Station in Waseca, Minnesota (a nice little arboretum, well worth the drive over if you are in the area). There are few American chestnuts anywhere in this country due to the disease Chestnut blight that entered the country from Asia in 1904 and almost eliminated the species – once one of the most common trees in the Eastern Deciduous Forest – within 50 years. The Chinese chestnut (*C. mollissima*) is even less hardy and I do not know of any in South Dakota or western Minnesota. The ones planted at the

Minnesota Horticulture Research Center near the Twin Cities have been short-lived.

What people bring or send in as chestnuts are usually nuts from the buckeye tree (*Aesculus glabra*). This is a common tree in our region since the squirrels plant them for free in almost every garden. The nut contains the poisonous glycosides aesculin and fraxin. Ingesting the raw seed can result in muscle twitching, vomiting and abdominal pain, diarrhea and death. The raw nuts, tender shoots and leaves, particularly wilted leaves, are also toxic to horses and cattle (rabbits too but they seem to be smart enough not to eat them). Squirrels seem to do just fine eating the raw nut and it apparently contains a sweetener that (at least to a squirrel) is sweeter than sugar. The nut can be made safe for human consumption by roasting and leaching and they were used as a starchy food by Native American but I do not recommend even trying to do this.



I am also receiving pictures of common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) fruit – do not eat this fruit! The dark, almost black, fruit is out right now and is being confused with chokecherries. Common buckthorn can be easily identified by the small spine at the tip of each branch. Do not eat the fruit as it can result in sudden and violent diarrhea.



I also received a great picture of a spruce covered with pine needle scale. The white bumps on the needles are not resin but the adult female insect. Beneath these shells you can find dozens of eggs (easily seen with a hand lens). Next spring, usually mid to late May, the eggs will hatch beneath their dead mom and the crawlers will move out to the expanding new foliage to find a spot to feed. Once a suitable location is found, the

crawlers will insert their beak in the needle and begin sucking up the sap. They gradually lose their legs and form a hard white shell over their bodies as they become adults. Control is generally done in the spring as the crawlers are beginning to move out from the shell.

Samples received

Faulk County

Can you identify these fruits?

The small reddish apple appears to be a 'Dolgo' crabapple based on the color and shape. This is a common crabapple cultivar in the state and the fruit is large enough to be used for jams and jellies. The larger apples (#2) appear to be 'Haralson', this is a common and hardy apple that often matures in early October.

The other apple (#3) was crushed and now mostly juice so I could not identify it. The pear appears to be a Parker – a cultivar from Iowa that I can find growing in many areas of eastern South Dakota though it can experience some winter-kill in harsh winters.

Grant County

Why is this pine losing its needles?

Several are doing the same thing.

This is just be normal fall needle drop for a ponderosa pine. Pines begin dropping their three-year old (the oldest) needles in September (sometimes even August) and some autumns – those with sunny warm weather like this year – the shedding can be very noticeable with the older needles becoming almost a straw yellow before dropping.

Gregory County

What is this plant and are the berries safe

to eat?

The leaf was from a Virginia-creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) a woody vine common to the state. The ¼-inch diameter bluish black berries appear in September and are quickly taken by the birds. I cannot find any information that discusses it as being poisonous but nor can I find anything that talks about how tasty it is – probably should leave it on the vine and buy a snickers bar instead.

McCook County

What is wrong with these trees and what

can be done?

I found two different trees (and problems) in the bag. The hackberry has nipple gall on the leaves, the large bumps coming out of the bottom of the leaves. There really is no effective treatment and since they do not harm the tree control is not necessary anyway. The American elm showed some – just a little - feeding by the elm leaf beetle. Unless the rest of the tree has more defoliation than this I would not recommend control for this problem either. If it does I recommend using carbaryl (Sevin) when the leaves fully expand next spring or an autumn soil drench application of imidacloprid (such as Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub Insect Control). However if a soil drench is made this autumn be sure to water the tree the day before to ensure better uptake of the chemical.